

# TEN THINGS

to know  
before you go



# THE GROUNDSWELL PROJECT

# Your Death Checklist

While it may be daunting to think about death - it doesn't have to be. Here are a few questions to you get you started. Don't worry about not having *all* the answers, not many of us do, but it's important to start somewhere.

If you're looking to find out more about end-of-life planning. Why not attend one of our [10 Things You Need to Know about Death](#) Workshops.

## *It's Time to Talk about Death*

- Have you written a will? If so is it up to date?
- Have you nominated your power of attorney?
- Where are your important documents? Who has access to them? Have you recorded your passwords for all your online accounts and social media profiles?
- Who will be your enduring guardian? This is the person who can speak up for you about medical interventions if you can't.
- Have you told your loved ones what medical interventions you want and do not want and under what circumstances?
- Have you discussed your end of life plans with family and friends?
- Would you prefer to die at home?
- Is there something comforting that you might want in the room with you as you are dying?
- What would you like to be said to you in your final days/moments? (*Many people want to be told that their affairs are in order and their dependants will be taken care of*)
- What do you hope for the people who are around you while you're dying?
- If you have children who will be their legal guardian?
- Who will receive special family items such as photos and treasured heirlooms?
- Who will take pets and animals under your care?
- What type of funeral do you want?
- Do you want to be buried, cremated or something else entirely?
- Where do you want to be buried or have your ashes scattered or your tree planted?
- What do you want written on your headstone/plaque memorial?
- Who do you want to perform the eulogy?
- Do you want to write your own obituary?
- Do you want to donate to a charity in lieu of flowers or in lieu of anything else? Or do you want to do both?
- Have you looked into "Do It Yourself" funerals?

# Your Emotional Will

## *What is an ‘Emotional Will’?*

An emotional will is about your legacy. It is a way to share your thoughts, values, lessons in life, passions, hopes and dreams with your children, friends and future generations. This is your chance to ensure that you don't leave this life with things left unsaid.

Because an emotional will is not a legal document you can be as creative as you'd like to be. You can “leave” memories, thoughts, well wishes, drawings, notebooks, photos, videos, sound recordings, it's really up to you how you do it.

We suggest you take time to complete an Emotional Will. It doesn't need to have a strict format or word limit and it is more likely to be a series of letters left for separate people than one large document. Give yourself time as you will likely revisit it and add things as time goes on.

## *There are a number of ways to begin:*

*People:* Firstly you might start by thinking about the important people in your life. Is there a memory or a moment that encapsulates a relationship? is there something this relationship taught you? Are you grateful for an experience you shared? Write a letter directly to that person and place it in a separate envelope.

*Moments:* What are key moments in your life where you have shown great courage, experienced great joy, intense sadness, overcome hardship, completed something you never thought possible or felt great happiness? These pivotal moments are often the signposts of our life, moments when life could have gone one way but it went another. An *Emotional Will* is an opportunity to share these memories with your loved ones. Often these moments are shared children, nieces and nephews.

*Objects:* Is there something in your will that you are gifting to a family member? This is another feature of the emotional will - you can share a memory or a story about the object, whether it's an heirloom or important for another reason, usually an object comes with memories and a legacy of its own. Describe this for the person you are gifting it to. Why did you chose this person to give it to? How did the object come to you? To the family? Are there important stories about your family “in” this object?

*Memories:* Often we have private memories or favourite stories about the people we love. These enduring memories often connect us throughout the years, even to old friends or to family members we only see occasionally. Share a story with an old friend about a cherished time you spent together. What did it mean to you to have them part of your life? You might feel the same about an old mentor or teacher. Write about and share these memories.

*Food:* The enjoyment and sharing of food is one of life's delights! Why not share your favourite recipe with a loved one. For example: “This is my favourite recipe that helped me through the tough times. It was Grandma's and she taught me how to cook it. I now pass this on to you and ask you to become the guardian of this much-treasured recipe”, or “Here is a recipe that I used to make for a lazy Sunday. When you make it, think of me”.

*Songs/Books:* The people who know you probably know what music you liked and books you enjoyed... but perhaps you may still surprise them? Why not put aside a copy of your top 10 books with a personal note written on the inside cover saying why you love this book? Or why not make a playlist of your favourite songs? One for driving? One for doing chores too?

*Photos:* Go through and label important photos with dates, places and the names of the people pictured. Note any memories or stories you wish to share. We often take for granted that our children or other family members will know the people and places in our photos, but perhaps they don't. Noting down ages is helpful too.

### *Where to keep your emotional will?*

You could leave it with a folder of other important documents - such as your health insurance, funeral plans and digital/online passwords. There are many options now online for keeping documents with free storage, however many people want to keep hard copies. Our advice is to buy a small box or folder to store these important documents.. Given the personal nature of the *Emotional Will* many people choose to give letters to people before they die.

### *Questions to get you started*

- Who are the people you want to leave messages for in your emotional will?
- What is a message you'd like to leave for your partner/spouse/best friend/children?
- Describe a time in your life that you showed great courage
- Describe a time when you experienced joy
- Do you have any regrets? How have these shaped your life?
- What is your most memorable childhood experience?
- Who were your mentors and how did they help shape you?
- What were your parents like? How did this relationship shape you?
- What was your first paid job?
- What is your first memory?
- What was school like for you?
- Did you have a childhood sweetheart? Share a story about this.
- Describe a time of great sorrow or sadness. What impact did this have on you?
- What do you remember about your grandparents?
- Where is your most favourite place? Describe it as vividly as you can.